**"The Young Communist League of America. Resolution Adopted by the 2nd Convention of the United Communist**

**Party, Kingston, NY -- January 1921."** The 2nd Convention of the UCP for the first time set in motion the establishment of a formal Communist youth organization in the United States. This is the text of the Convention Resolution which established the "Young Communist League, Section of the Young Communist International." The resolution stated that "The Party shall recognize the importance of a young people's movement. It is the duty of the Party to prepare them with all the means at its disposal. An intensive cooperation between both organizations is an absolute necessity." To this end financial support and organizational effort by the organizations District Organizers was pledged, space in the official organ committed to youth matters, and literature planned. An additional legal organization "to carry on the legal work of the Young Communist League of America" and to provide "education, recreational, and social facilities" was called for in the resolution, presaging the establishment of a parallel Workers Party of America and Young Workers League in 1922.

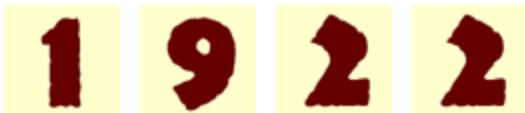
**"Organization Rules of the Young Communist League of America (Adopted by the National Committee of the YCL)." [circa March 1921]**

According to the literature, there was no organized youth section of the American Communist movement until a founding convention of the Young Communist League held at Bethel, CT on April 20, 1922. This document from the Comintern Archive indicates that fully a year earlier the United Communist Party was moving to establish just such an organization at a First National Convention "in the near future." This document sets down the basic structure of the organization that was to follow -- the "Young Communist League of America -- Section of the Young Communist International." The YCLA was to be an underground organization build on the UCP model, with local groups of no more than 10 members which elected their own group organizer, who in turn participated in the "city central unit." Dues were to be 25 cents a month, the initiation fee was to be 50 cents, and the organization was to work for "the communist education of the young workers; active participation in the struggle to overthrow capitalism; (defense of the proletarian dictatorship and the workers soviets after the seizure of power); reorganization of labor; and the cultural development of the working youth along the lines of communist principles." Based upon this and a programmatic document in the archives, it now seems likely that some sort of formal underground American communist youth organization existed in 1921 -- earlier than previously believed.

**"Constitution of the Young Workers League of America: Tentative Draft: Basis for Organizing Branches of the YWL." [circa March 1, 1922]**

Closely related to the establishment of a formal "Legal Political Party" called the Workers Party of America by the underground CPA was the establishment of an above-ground youth section of the same known as the Young Workers League of America (YWL). This is the draft constitution written by the CPA in early 1922 around which the new group was to be organized, pending formal ratification at a future founding convention of the organization. The YWL was said to have been established "to organize and educate the young of the working class to understand their true position in capitalist society, to work for the abolition of capitalism" and for the establishment of a workers' republic and classless international society. Membership was to be open to individuals between the ages of 14 and 30 willing to pay dues and abide by the rules of the organization. A recommendation of two members in good standing was required for admission to membership. Primary party unit was to be the Branch, consisting of 5 or more members and meeting at least twice monthly, with branches to be established geographically and on the basis of language. Multiple branches in one locale were to be link through a City Central Committee. Governance was to be through annual conventions, with a 7 member National Executive Committee headed by an Executive Secretary handing day-to-day decision-making in between conventions. Dues were set at 25 cents per month, remitted for stamps which were to be pasted on a card, with exemptions allowed for unemployment, etc.

**"Report to the 2nd World Congress of the Young Communist International by the Young Communist League of America and the United Communist Party of America, April 1921."** This document by Young Communist League of America national organizer "H. Edwards" fully substantiates the theory that there was a communist youth section in America one year previous to the "April 1922" date claimed in the literature. Edwards gives the April 1921 Jena World Congress of the YCI a brief synopsis of the history of the radical youth movement in America. After the split of the Socialist Party in 1919, the SP's Young People's Socialist League was similarly effected. "Edwards" states that "many of the younger comrades left the League and the remaining part of the League as a whole decided to remain independent of any party while the controversy between the two Communist parties was going on." The SP regulars fought to gain control of the organization, League members were unclear of their mission, financial crisis set in, and the YPSL's national organization dissolved. "Only a few of the local or sectional organizations of it managed to remain more or less intact," says "Edwards." While the CPA and CLP indicated support in principle of a youth section, it was not until the 2nd Convention of the United Communist Party in January 1921 that real work began to organize a Young Communist League of America. In the subsequent three months, leaflets and a pamphlet were prepared, provisional rules drawn up, and organizational work done in the main cities with a UCP presence, resulting in the organization of "about 20 groups." "At the earliest possible moment a national convention of the YCL will be called, at which time the members will outline the ways, means, and policies of the organization and elect their own officials," the national organizer stated.



**Youth, Vol. 1, No. 1 [Feb. 1922]** Large file. Graphic pdf of the first issue of the official organ of the newly established Young Workers League of America, forerunner of The Young Worker.

Contents: "Editorial: Our Paper -- Your Paper." "Editorial: A National Young Workers' League." "Editorial: International Liebknecht Day." "Editorial: Reaching the Youth." A. Wanderer: "Some Young Communists of Europe." E. Elston: "The Task Before Us." G.: "To the Proletarian Students of America." E. Elston: "399 B.C. -- 1922 A.D." "Revolutionary Young Workers' Movement in the United States" (Resolution of 1st National Convention of WPA, Dec. 1921). "Manifesto of the Second Congress of the Young Communist International." "World of Youth: News of What the Young Revolutionists are Doing." "The Bourgeois Press." "Think Economically!"

**Young Worker, Vol. 1, No. 2 [March-April 1922]** Large file. Graphic pdf of the second issue of the official organ of the newly established Young Workers League of America, formerly Youth. Max Shachtman, Editor. Contents: Max Shachtman: "Editorial: Our National Organ." Max Shachtman: "Editorial: International of Youth." Max Shachtman: "Editorial: To Work!" Harry Gannes: "They Do the Dirty Work." "The Morals of the Movies: A Review of the Arbuckle Case." Ernest Todd: "Spring" (poem). Nat Kaminsky: "A Page of Class Struggle" (Albany streetcar strike). Oliver Carlson: "The League in Action." "Manifesto and Program (Tentative Draft): Submitted by the National Organization Committee of the YWL." "Constitution: Tentative Draft. Basis for Organizing Branches of the YWL." "Greetings from the Young Communist International." "Spread the Message." "Convention Call."

**Young Worker, Vol. 1, No. 3 [May 1922]** Large file. Graphic pdf of the third issue of the official organ of the newly established Young Workers League of America, formerly Youth. Max Shachtman, likely Editor. Contents: "A United Front of Juvenile Labor in Denmark." "Editorial: May Day Has Come." "Editorial: "The Young Workers League Convention." "Editorial: Genoa -- Another Broken Rung." Rose Pastor Stokes: "Two Sketches." W. Schneiderman: "The Awakening." Tony Wishtart: "Montani Semper Liberi: The Freedom of the West Virginia Working-Class." Oliver Carlson: "What Means This Independence." August Valentine: "News From the West Virginia Mining District." "The Fight Against the Pauperization of the Working Youth: Open Letter of the YCI." H. Seligson and E. Elston: "Appeal for Revolutionary Unity." "When You and I Were Young, Maggie..." Harry Gannes: "Can Students Be Revolutionary?" "Class War Prisoners." S. Max Kitzes: "Clarity and Action" (poem). Oliver Carlson: "In Memory of the Paris Commune: Speech on the 51st Anniversary of the Paris Commune at the Central

Opera House, March 18, 1922, New York City." "Resolution of the New York Young Workers League Transferring The Young Worker to National Organization." "Agenda for the First National Convention of the Young Workers League of America." W.W.E.: "The Red Dawn" (poem). "Where the YWL Exists." "We're Going Over." "What Others Think of Us." "The Famine Scouts." Friends of Soviet Russia: "One Loaf or a Thousand" (full page ad).

**"Constitution of the Young Communist League of America: Adopted by the First National Convention, early May 1922."** Basic document of organizational law of the underground Communist youth section. The underground Young Communist League was a parallel organization to the "legal" Young Workers League -- theoretically sitting in a position to control the activity of the latter organization, which was originally intended to attract a larger and broader membership. Initiation fee in the YCL was 50 cents and monthly dues were 25 cents per month. Dues were receipted with dues stamps issued by the National Office. The basic unit of organization was the "Group" consisting of (in ideal circumstances) from 5 to 10 members and meeting at least every other week. Groups elected their own "Group Captains" to coordinate with the center. Multiple groups in a locale were parts of a "Section" of up to 5 groups; multiple Sections in a locality combined to form a "Sub-District," which was in turn part of a "District" organization with boundaries following those of the underground CPA. The NEC elected the District and Sub-District Organizers. Each level of the YCL organization had its own governing Committee, which supervised and disciplined lower levels of organization. In between annual conventions the YCL was to be governed by a 5 member National Executive Committee, which was to publish a monthly bulletin for the membership and an issue of the group's official organ every third month.

**"Program of the Young Communist League of America: Adopted by the First National Convention, early May 1922."** Fundamental statement of organizational policy issued by the underground youth section of the Communist Party of America. "Centralized leadership is an essential factor for the success of the proletarian revolution, nationally as well as internationally. Therefore, the YCL of A places itself under the political leadership of the recognized Section of the Communist International, the Communist Party of America," the document states. "The YCL of A shall at all times endeavor to attain an open mass movement of the revolutionary youth.... When sufficient strength has been achieved openly to function as a Communist organization, the open organization, merging with the YCL of A, becomes the YCL of A; but until the proletariat has obtained political supremacy -- the dictatorship of the proletariat -- capitalist society compels the maintenance of an illegal apparatus."

**"Relation Between the 'Y' [underground YCL] and the 'L' [overground YWL]: Resolution adopted by the First National Convention of the Young Communist League of America, early May 1922."** Set of extraconstitutional guidelines governing the activities of underground Young Communist League members within the Branches of the Young Workers League -- which was initially conceived of as being a less doctrinally pure, mass-oriented organization. Every YCL member was required to play an active part in the YWL and to establish itself as a nucleus within that organization. "All questions of importance" regarding the YWL were to first be decided within these YCL nuclei, which, contrary to sound underground practice, were to include members of multiple underground YCL Groups. These nuclei were to elect steering committees and the policy decisions of these nuclei or their steering committees were to be binding upon all members of the nucleus.

**"Constitution of the Young Workers League of America: Adopted by the First National Convention, New York City -- May 13-15, 1922."** Basic document of organizational law of the Young Workers League, ostensibly the youth section of the Workers Party of America. Interesting in that there is no reference to either the WPA or the Young Communist International in the document, nor is there any sort of party-control mechanism inserted into the structure of the YWL. Instead, the YWL was established as an independent organization, its membership open to "all young proletarians between the ages of 14 and 30," with its National Conventions designated the supreme authority of the organization. The National Conventions were to elect a "National Executive Committee" of 7 persons, at least 5 of whom were to live in the designated city of the national headquarters, as well as 5 alternates. The headquarters city was to be designated by the convention -- which chose Chicago (and this while national headquarters of the Workers Party of America and the underground

Communist Party of America were both based in New York!). Structurally, the organization was to be built of "branches" of between 5 and 150 members, which multiple branches in a single urban local to elect proportional "City Central Committees." Initiation fee was 25 cents and monthly dues (receipted with stamps) were 25 cents per month -- of which the National Office was to keep 10 cents, the City Central Committee 5 cents, and the branch 10 cents. There was no parallel structure for language federations, but rather branches of any language were to have an equal relationship to the National Executive Committee.

**Young Worker, Vol. 1, No. 4 [June-July 1922]** Large file. Graphic pdf of the fourth issue of the official organ of the newly established Young Workers League of America, formerly Youth. Oliver Carlson, Editor. Contents: C. Revilo: "Song of Youth" (poem). "The Dawn's in the East." Oliver Carlson: "Editorial: Our League Established." Oliver Carlson: "Editorial: 'American Freedom.'" Oliver Carlson: "Editorial: Child Labor." Martin Abern: "Are We Tryng to Break the Unions?" Harry Gannes and William Z. Foster: "The Young Worker and the Unions: An Interview." Oliver Carlson: "Our First National Convention." Martin Abern: "Who's Red — And Why?" I. Ginsberg: "Awake, Young Workers!" A. Thorne: "On the Road." Ernest Todd: "Brains, Brawn and Bone-Heads." S. Max Kitzes: "Freedom" (poem). William Haber: "The Role of the Young Workers' League." "Our Relations to the Workers Party: Resolution Adopted by First National Convention, YWL of A, May 13th-15th, 1922." Oliver Carlson: "The Road Before Us: A Speech at YWL Convention, May 13th, 1922, New York City." Sarnjinni Naidu: "Dawn" (poem). "International Children's Week." Hyzam: "A Slip of the Pen."

**Young Worker, Vol. 1, No. 5 [Aug.-Sept. 1922]** Large file. Graphic pdf of the fifth issue of the official organ of the newly established Young Workers League of America, formerly Youth. Oliver Carlson, Editor. Contents: "News of the Leagues." "The Day of Youth" (International Youth Day -- Sept. 3). Harry Gannes: "Crime and the Working Class Youth." Martin Abern: "'Culture,' Science and Working Class Education." Leon Trotsky: "Lenin: A Working-Class Leader of the Times." Oliver Carlson: "National Internationalism." John G. Neihardt: "Cry of the Workers" (poem). "Young Worker in Press Picnic." "A Centrist Program." "Erect Beautiful Prison for the Working Youth." ECYCI: "A World Congress of Working Youth." William Schneideman: "The Problem of Education." Richard Wagner: "The Revolution." "Urge Establishing of Soviet State in Program of American Section of Young Communist International." "The Fight in Paris in 1848." "Child Workers Increase." "Issue Two Pamphlets of Especial Interest to Young Workers." "Diseased and Needy Children Left in Wake of Capitalism."

**Young Worker, Vol. 1, No. 6 [Oct. 1922]** Large file. Graphic pdf of the sixth issue of the official organ of the newly established Young Workers League of America. Oliver Carlson, Editor. Contents: "Editorial: On the Right Track." "Editorial: Back to the Poison Factories." "Editorial: Injunction and Young Scabs." "Editorial: Third Congress of the YCI." Jack Carney: "The Future is With the Young." Harry Young: "No More War?" "British Workers Hold Congress" (YCLGB). "YCL Thesis on the Economic Struggle of the Young Workers." Edgar Hart: "The Basis for Prostitution in Capitalism: Part 1." Martin Abern: "Into the Fight, Young Workers!: Speech Deliverd at the Labor Lyceum, St. Louis, MO, on International Youth Day, Sunday, September 3rd, 1922." "News of the Leagues." "The Young Workers League and the American Legion." Katharine Fisher: "Kinfolk" (poem). NEC of the YWL: "The Red Raids: Statement on the Prosecution of Communists and the Present Situation in the United States."

**Young Worker, Vol. 1, No. 7 [Nov. 1922]** Large file. Graphic pdf of the sixth issue of the official organ of the

newly established Young Workers League of America. Oliver Carlson, Editor. Contents: Editorial: "Corrupting the Youth." Editorial: "Is This Not Murder!" Oliver Carlson: "Yesterday - Today - Tomorrow." "A Worker-Soldier Writes Us" (Leslie R. Hurt, World War Veterans). ECI: "Why a United Front of Young Workers." Martin Abern and Paul Stevens: "The Young Workers League is Discovered!" (American Legion). Harry Gannes: "The Working Children of Boston and Vicinity." "Youth in America's Industries." "After the Meeting." Edgar Hart: "The Basis for Prostitution in Capitalism: Part 2." George Jean Nathan and H.L. Mencken: "Ye Gods! What's This?" Carol Bristol and Clara Reiseroff: "Seattle Booms" (YWL poem). "News of the Leagues." "International News." Rena Deane: "Hail, Young Workers!" (poem). Editorial: "Necessity -- Mother of Invention." Editorial: "War Clouds Again." Editorial: "The World Congress." Editorial: "Five Years Old -- Still Going." "Agenda of the YCI."

**Young Worker, Vol. 1, No. 8 [Dec. 1922]** Large file. Graphic pdf of the sixth issue of the official organ of the newly established Young Workers League of America. Oliver Carlson, Editor. Contents: Editorial: "An American Fascisti." Editorial: "Ever Present Red Youth." Editorial: "Orphans of the Working Class." Clude Bealy: "Youth in America's Coal Fields." S.B. Fields: "The Movement -- 'As She Is.'" C. Revilo: "Literature and the Workers' Movement." S.B. Fields: "As to Change." John Williamson: "A Word to You." "News of the Leagues." "News of the Young Workers' League of Canada." Lillian Saffern: "Why I Joined the Young Workers' League." Jennie Greenberg: "My Reasons for Joining the Young Workers' League." Edgar Hart: "The Basis for Prostitution in Capitalism: Part 3." M.L.: "Once Upon a Time." "Reviewing the Ranks."

**1 9 2 4**

**"Young Workers League of New York Endorses Minority, 76 to 45." (*Daily Worker*) [event of Dec. 18, 1924]** On Dec. 18,

1924, a membership meeting of the Young Workers League's New York District was held. Reports were delivered on behalf of the (Foster-Cannon) majority thesis on the farmer-labor party tactic by Oliver Carlson, representing the CEC of the YWL, which endorsed the majority thesis; and on behalf of the (Pepper-Ruthenberg) minority thesis by Jack Stachel, DO of YWL District 2 [New York]. After lengthy discussion of the matter by the meeting, concluding statements were delivered by the two reporters and a vote was taken. The pro-FFLP thesis of the CEC minority handily defeated that of the CEC majority by a vote of 76 to 45. "We favor the application of the labor party policy as a maneuver of the Workers Party in the united front tactics," the adopted resolution of the meeting declared, adding "We condemn the prevalent manifestations of petty factionalism so destructive to our movement." A hastily tacked on final paragraph of the article by a *Daily Worker* journalist clearly partial to the majority faction notes that the New York District of the YWL included 600 members, of which "only 121 members voted at this meeting."

**1 9 2 7**

**"The Aims and Methods of Young Workers Education," by Oliver Carlson [August 1927]** Oliver Carlson was a former

National Secretary of the Young People's Socialist League (1918-1919) who joined the Workers Party of America and was an active leader of the Young Workers League. From 1925-1928 he was annually the Director of Communist Summer Schools sponsored by the Workers (Communist) Party, including the very first of these events (Waino, WI). This article was written by Carlson for the 1927 YWL Winlock, Washington Camp Yearbook. Analytical and pedagogical in tone, Carlson first addresses the possible criticism that the curriculum at the Summer Schools are "biased": "We were determined that a definite working class outlook should permeate every subject studied. We openly admitted that all education is of necessity biased, especially that which deals with social, economic, and political problems. Ours was biased in favor of the proletariat. For the benefit of those who demand 'pure truth,' let me point out that the working class view on social sciences is far more correct than that "impartial" view which is dished out to the unsuspecting in the public educational institutions." After discussing the relative effectiveness of various methods of instruction, Carlson advocates relatively older



rather than younger students in the schools: "The boy or girl of 14, 15, or 16 years who is still in school has not as yet been forced to shift for himself, to make his own living, and to feel the pressure of the class struggle. To such a one the class war and all other theories relating to it cannot be duly appreciated." He also advocates a skewing of more males than females for a similar reason, that more men than women are wage workers, particularly in the "more basic industries where the need for theoretical and practical leadership is the greatest."



**"History of the American Socialist Youth Movement to 1929," by Shirley Waller [circa 1946]**

A summary history of the early Socialist and Communist youth movement in America written circa 1946 by a member of a small Trotskyist organization, the Workers Party. This material is an extended excerpt of that first published as two small circulation WP bulletins. These bulletins quickly went out of print and were brought back only as a mimeographed pamphlet in 1959 (with additional material) by the Socialist Workers Party. Waller's history is encumbered with an orthodox Trotskyist periodization which declares a "beginning of the degeneration of the YCL" from late 1923 and makes an ahistorical declaration of an "abrupt halt" to the "organic process of the youth movement" from 1925. These dates obviously were chosen based upon the political position of one Soviet Russian Communist Party leader vis-a-vis the others rather than on the basis of objectively observed and persuasively documented historical events in the YCL itself. That said (and despite several glaring factual inaccuracies corrected here in the footnotes) this history is not without interest as a thumbnail sketch of the evolution of the Socialist Party of America's youth movement into the Communist youth movement of the 1920s.